

## MENTAL HEALTH UPDATE December 31, 2008

### *Pieces Of History In Vermont Mental Health*

*The “Pieces of History” series in the Mental Health Update describes key events and significant policy milestones in the evolving Mental Health Systems of Care, thus, connecting our past to the present.*

**The Housing Contingency Fund:** One of the first rental assistance funds for adults with severe mental illnesses in the nation, the Vermont Housing Contingency Fund began in 1988 with \$300,000.00. The fund can be used for monthly rent subsidies, to help with the start-up costs of getting into a new apartment, or to help a client stay in housing. As part of an overall strategy to help address the affordable housing crisis, the Department of Mental Health also dedicated a full time staff position to work on housing issues including access, new development, and preservation of existing housing. In part due to this focused effort, Vermont’s community mental health system has been able to develop a range of housing options funded by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. In recent years, the Housing Contingency Fund more than doubled to \$790,000 annually.

#### **Joint Fiscal Oversight Committee Approves Second Rescission in FY 09**

State revenues continue to fall as the national recession deepens and the Joint Fiscal Oversight Committee approved a second round of reductions for the current fiscal year. Early this week DMH provided each mental health agency with a reduction target based on the 2.5% rescission and under utilization of Medicaid allocations from this year’s first quarter. DMH will review the proposed reductions from each agency and will compile a state-wide impact statement of the cuts that are taken.

#### ***CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH***

##### **Behavioral Intervention Program - Minimum Standards**

The final draft for review and comment is now posted to the Department of Mental Health and Department of Education’s web site. Feel free to review and send comments as instructed in the cover memo. This is the final comment period. The minimum standards will begin to be implemented for the 2009 school year and can be found at <http://healthvermont.gov/mh/boards/documents/StandardsfortheuseofBehaviorInt-finaldraftwithDOEandMH1.pdf>

### **Joint Fiscal Committee Approves Transition-Age Youth Grant**

The Joint Fiscal Committee of the Vermont Legislature gave its approval of the SAMSHA system of care grant for Transition-aged youth. In the next few weeks, contracts for positions will be finalized and the "The Invitation to Communities" will be sent out. The invitation will mark the beginning of the community planning process. We are very pleased to announce that Brenda Bean, the author of the grant, will become the project director for this 6 year grant. She has performed this role both for the Access grant and the Cups grant and we are all delighted to have her expertise on this important project. For more information, contact Charlie Biss.

### **"Psychotropic Medications and Children" Meeting**

The next meeting concerning "The Use of Psychotropic Medications with Children" will take place on Monday January 5th at 12 noon in the Skylight conference room on the Waterbury complex. This is the second meeting of this group and DMH will facilitate the discussion on some of the questions generated at the first meeting. For more information contact Charlie Biss.

## ***FUTURES PROJECT***

### **Consultation Group**

The Futures Team will meet with the Consultation group on Thursday January 8<sup>th</sup> in room 3B of the Health Department from 1:00-3:00. This regular and informal meeting provides the Futures staff the opportunity to receive feedback about topics we are currently working on. There is no formal membership for this group and all interested consumers and family members are encouraged to attend. The topics for this meeting include the continued development of a proposed secure residential recovery program, the feedback from local and state program standing committees on the care management project and the upcoming legislative session.

### **Care Management Steering Committee**

The Care Management Steering Committee will meet with representatives of the consulting team on Monday January 12 (room 3B of the Health Department). The consulting team is proposing that Vermont use the LOCUS (Level of Care Utilization System) as a framework for the developing system of care management. The LOCUS can be used to assess the immediate service needs of clients in crisis and also to monitor changes in client status at different points in time. Various programs in Vermont have used the LOCUS so steering committee members are encouraged to come ready to discuss the advantages and limitations of using this more widely in Vermont. The consultants will also review options for creating a "real time" listing of available beds state-wide – emergency service screeners have consistently asked for such a system to be implemented in Vermont.

## ***VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL CENSUS***

The Vermont State Hospital Census was 45 as of midnight Monday. The average census for the past 45 days was 43.5.